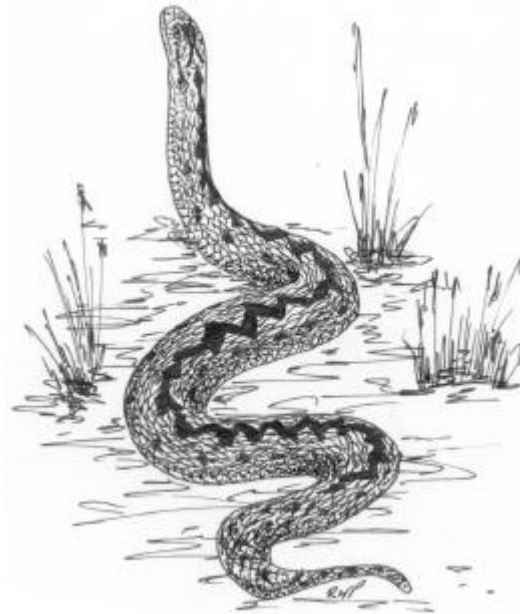


ADDER VIPER BERUS SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

Although there is no UK SAP for the adder, it is a UK species of conservation concern³⁹, and along with the three other reptile species found in the county borough, it plays a vital part in the area's ecology. Furthermore, the educational value of these species cannot be underestimated. Many natural history walks are enlivened by a glimpse of something 'exotic', and countless budding naturalists develop their interest through encounters with wild reptiles. The wider concept of environmental education can often be made more attractive by approaching from a reptilian direction.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority (P) or species of conservation concern (S) (1998)	S
EC Habitats Directive	-
Conservation Regs 1994	-
Berne Convention (1982)	-
Bonn Convention (1979)	-
CI TES (1975)	-
WCA (1981)	Sch. 5, 9



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2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

The adder is the most widely distributed of the European snakes, mainly due to its varied diet and tolerance of cold conditions. It is found throughout mainland UK, on habitats ranging from sand dunes, woodland margins and wetlands, to upland heaths.

Adders require adequate basking and hibernation sites, and are often found in areas of sparse vegetation where they may utilise the burrows of small rodents. It hibernates communally, deeper in the ground than other British reptiles, and emerges earlier in the spring. Basking areas are near to hibernation sites and must be free of shading vegetation. They slough soon after emerging, the cast skins indicating their presence. Adders are the easiest of British snakes to record often basking in very visible sites, and requiring only a light tread and slow approach. They prefer humid, moist conditions, with muggy days after rainfall being most profitable for survey work. Adders often bask communally, males and females being easily distinguished by colour differences. The adder basks at a lower temperature than other British reptiles (8°C to 16°C). Within Wales there are significant colonies associated with the coastal sand dune systems and open heathland of the west.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

The adder is well distributed throughout in the county borough, often associated with commons and forestry plantations characteristic of the area. However, there is a lack of accurate data, although there seems to be a general decline in reptiles in the county borough. No systematic survey has been undertaken of adder populations.

2.3 Links with Habitats

The adder's ability to colonise most habitats means that this action plan should be considered in conjunction with those for the majority of terrestrial habitats, in particular:

- *Planted Coniferous Woodlands*
- **Wildlife Corridors**
- *Common Land*
- *Heathland*

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Loss of habitat due to development.
- Loss of suitable basking sites due to natural succession (may be a consequence of management changes on common land).
- Loss of suitable basking sites due to intentional afforestation.
- Direct persecution by humans.

4. CURRENT ACTION

Although there are various initiatives in operation, little is being done at the present time, either nationally or locally.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable for this species.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Halt any decline in adder populations within the county borough.
- 5.2.2 Actively manage sites where succession may pose a threat to resident adders.
- 5.2.3 Continue to improve public perception of the adder.

6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.1 Policy and Legislation											
6.1.2 Seek to designate sites with breeding populations of three or more species of reptile as SINC.	CCBC	-									✓
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Manage habitats to prevent vegetation from shading out existing colonies through natural succession.	CCBC	GWT GLWT	✓								

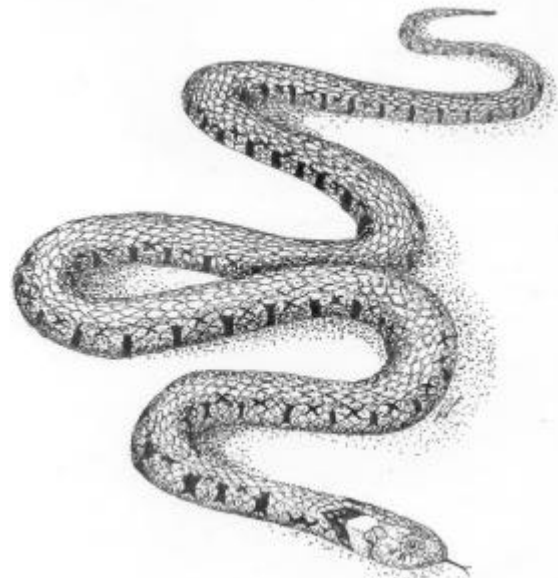
Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management (continued)											
6.2.2 Ensure forest plantation schemes do not endanger existing populations.	FC	-	✓								
6.2.3 Seek to include the maintenance of suitable open areas in agri-environment schemes wherever possible.	CCW	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Encourage natural colonisation of new sites to link fragmented habitats.	CCBC	-		✓							
6.3.2 Provide relocation sites for populations where disturbance to habitat is unavoidable.	CCBC	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3.3 Adders pose a limited threat to public safety; provide relocation for any individuals or colonies that may be in danger of persecution.	CCBC	CCW RSPCA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3.4 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Provide advice to all concerned parties on sympathetic management of adder habitats.	CBP	GWT GLWT	✓								
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Set up a Caerphilly county borough records database for reptiles, including the adder.	CBP	-		✓							
6.5.2 Develop an effective way to monitor known sites for population fluctuations.	CBP	-		✓							
6.5.3 Encourage a county wide survey of reptile sites to accurately ascertain present status and distribution, and input data into the county borough database.	CBP	-	✓								
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Liaise with local wildlife and community groups to educate members about the adder (other snakes/reptiles) in an attempt to dispel inbuilt fears.	CBP	local community/ wildlife groups	✓								
6.6.2 Promote, through publicity, media and events, a wider and more sympathetic understanding of reptile conservation.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

GRASS SNAKE *NATRIX NATRIX* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

The grass snake is a UKBAP species of conservation concern³⁹ and is one that has undoubtedly suffered large population losses over the last 30 years. The presence of grass snakes is an indication of the health of a habitat, and it is an ideal species to encourage younger generations to participate in pond reclamation and management projects.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority (P) or species of conservation concern (S) (1998)	S
EC Habitats Directive	-
Conservation Regs 1994	-
Berne Convention (1982)	-
Bonn Convention (1979)	-
CITES 1975	-
WCA (1981)	Sch. 5



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2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

Grass snakes are the most nervous of the British reptiles, often basking partially covered by vegetation. Along with their cryptic coloration, this can make them difficult to see.

The young are found in September, often basking near to, or on the vegetation pile from which they emerged. Grass snakes bask at higher temperatures than other British reptiles (between 12°C and 20°C). The grass snake is found throughout mainland England and Wales, although it is virtually absent from Scotland, and is not found in Ireland. It is likely that this distribution is determined by climate, as the grass snake is much less cold tolerant than the adder. Within Wales the species is widespread, but restricted to suitable habitats.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

The grass snake is found throughout the county borough but is certainly suffering a decline in population. There are a number of sites where they have disappeared within the last decade, although the causes are not always apparent. There has been no systematic survey of the grass snake in the county borough.

2.3 Links with habitats

The grass snake, due to its restricted diet, is only found in association with wetland or flowing water habitats. The health of these habitats, especially the fish and amphibian populations within, is crucial to the grass snake. Any Habitat Statement/Action Plan concerning water or wetlands should be read in conjunction with this species action plan.

- **Wetlands**
- *Species-rich Grasslands* (Rhos pasture)
- *Common Land*
- *Post-Industrial Land*

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Loss of habitat to pollution, development or natural succession
- Loss of prey species (see Amphibians SAP)
- Loss of suitable egg-laying sites
- Unintentional disturbance of egg sites, for example in compost heaps.
- Persecution

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 Management and creation of new wetlands will have benefitted the grass snake, although little has been done to specifically benefit the grass snake.
- 4.2 Rescue Programmes: sometimes the only option after disturbance to breeding sites is to hatch the eggs artificially, dramatically reducing the mortality rate, and providing healthy well-nourished juveniles for restocking wild populations or new sites. A number of captive bred individuals were released into a purpose built habitat in the grounds of Parc Cwm Darran in the late 1980s. No accurate monitoring has been done but the species is still present on that site.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable to this species.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Halt the decline in grass snake populations. (Target: 2005)
- 5.2.2 Identify present locations of colonies through local knowledge, historical evidence and surveys, and maintain and improve these sites. (Target: 2003)
- 5.2.3 Monitor present sites to identify possible local threats to the population in the county borough. (Target: ongoing)

6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.1 Policy and Legislation											
6.1.1 Seek to designate sites with three or more species of breeding reptiles as SIN C.	CCBC	-									✓

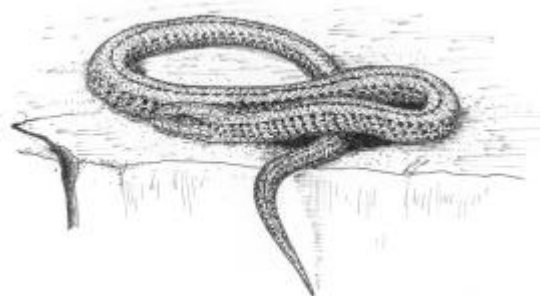
Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 In conjunction with habitat action plans for wetlands, ensure sites are protected from pollution, development, natural succession etc.	CCBC	EA KWT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.2.2 Take any opportunities that arise to create new grass snake habitat e.g. school grounds, pond creation.	CCBC	Gwk KWT Schools		✓			✓			✓	
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Encourage, through active management, the natural colonisation of new habitats, for example, using displaced specimens, or captive bred individuals from rescue programs.	CCBC	GWT GLWT	✓						✓		
6.3.2 Continue rescue programmes for disturbed breeding grass snake eggs and provide a relocation service for any individuals or populations that are threatened by unavoidable development or persecution.	CBP	(CCBC GWT GLWT CMCS)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3.3 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Provide advice to landowners etc. on the importance of fresh water habitats and their surroundings to grass snake survival.	CBP	(KWT EA CMCS)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4.2 Provide reassurance, information and advice to persons living in the vicinity of grass snake colonies.	CBP	(CMCS)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Set up county database for reptiles.	CCBC	-		✓							
6.5.2 Carry out surveys to ascertain sites and population sizes, and input data into the county borough database.	CBP	CMCS	✓			✓			✓		
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Promote reptile conservation and improve public image through events and activities.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6.2 Liaise with local wildlife groups to encourage reptile awareness.	CBP	local community / wildlife groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

SLOW WORM AND COMMON LIZARD SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

The **slow worm** (*Anguis fragilis*) is one of only three species of lizard found in the UK. It is unusual in that it is legless, bearing a superficial resemblance to a snake. It has undoubtedly suffered a population decline over the last few decades and for this reason, as well as being one of the few reptiles often found by children on nature rambles, it has been included in a local action plan. The **common lizard** (*Lacerta vivipara*) is similar to the slow worm in many of its requirements and pressures, and is therefore included in this species action plan.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
	slow worm and common lizard
priority species (P) or species of conservation concern (S) ³⁹	S
EC Habitats Directive	-
Conservation Regs 1994	-
Berne Convention (1982)	-
Bonn Convention (1979)	-
CITES (1975)	-
WCA (1981)	Sch. 5



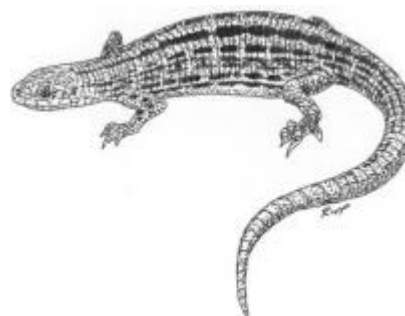
slow worm

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2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

Slow worms were ubiquitous in the UK until a few decades ago. There seems to have been a significant decline in numbers, although this is based mainly on anecdotal evidence. Within Wales, the species is widespread, but appears to be in decline. Slow worms like well-vegetated areas with good cover from predation. They are very rarely seen in the open, but are often found beneath steel sheets. These may be placed in areas to help confirm the presence of this species.



common lizard

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Although secretive slow worms seldom flee before they are discovered. They are easily distinguished from British snakes by their smooth, almost cylindrical body, very small scales and uniform grey or brown coloration. Like many other lizards, slow worms shed their tails when stressed, and if capture is necessary, they should be handled with great care. Slow worms are ovoviviparous (the method of reproduction in which the young develop from eggs retained in the mother's body), with eggs hatching on laying to reveal coppery gold young with bold dark brown sides.

Common lizards are agile, alert and extremely fast when warm. They rely on cryptic camouflage, lying motionless before fleeing to cover. This rapid movement is often all that betrays their presence. Common lizards are often found along railway lines and in the vicinity of old dry-stone walls, in which they hibernate (not communally). They are active at lower temperatures than the grass snake, though not as low as the adder, basking between 9°C and 18°C. Common lizards are much less easily observed than the slow worm and for that reason are less commonly recorded on a

site. However, this species is found throughout the UK and is notable in being Ireland's only reptile. Within Wales, it is often found along old railway lines where the bare ballast provides basking and hunting sites.

Surveys for both species ought to be undertaken during the months April/May and September, when there is adequate sun but the nights are cool enough to require basking during the day. The optimum season is spring when there is an increase in mating activity and the best times of day are 0900 to 1100, and 1600 to 1900, when reptiles are most likely to be basking in open locations. Most reptiles are deaf to a large part of a human's audible range, but are easily alerted by heavy footfalls and sudden dramatic movements.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

Both species are widespread within the county borough, although it is likely that both have suffered a decline in numbers over recent years. Old industrial sites and railway lines are found throughout the county borough and may be locally important for these species. Further surveys are required to confirm the status of the species in the county borough

2.3 Links with Habitats

These species require a varied diet of invertebrates, which may be found in most habitats. They both require a degree of direct sunlight, although the slow worm lies beneath dead vegetation, scrap-metal and other rubbish to receive the heat indirectly. All Habitat Statements/Action Plans should consider whether these species are present.

- **Wildlife Corridors** (hedgerows railway lines, stone walls)
- **Post-Industrial Land**
- *Common Land*
- *Urban Habitats*

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Loss of suitable habitat due to development, natural succession, etc.
- Loss of suitable hibernation sites due to decline in traditional farm practices (less long-term storage of manure, loss of dry-stone walls).
- Persecution, particularly of the slow worm.
- Probable locally high rates of predation by domestic cats.

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 Other than small-scale educational projects and talks, no action is currently taking place within the borough.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable to these species.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Obtain quantitative data on location and numbers of both species through local knowledge, historical evidence and survey.
- 5.2.2 Halt the probable decline of these species and monitor present sites for possible threats to the population.
- 5.2.3 Use every opportunity to promote the conservation of, and improve public conception of reptiles.
- 5.2.4 Improve existing habitats which may be suitable for future species colonisation.

6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.1 Policy and Legislation											
6.1.1 Seek to designate sites with three or more species of breeding reptiles as SINC.	CCBC	-									✓
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Prevent loss or degradation of existing sites.	CBP	-	✓								
6.2.2 Encourage provision for reptiles on any new habitat developments, for example, school grounds.	CCBC	Gwk CMCS GWT GLWT	✓								
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Encourage, through provision of suitable cover, the colonisation of new areas by these species.	CBP	(CCBC CMCS GWT GLWT)			✓						
6.3.2 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	-									
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Raise awareness of the conservation requirements of these species among landowners and managers.	CBP	-	✓								
6.4.2 Provide a support and problem solving service to landowners, especially allotment owners, on methods of management sympathetic to reptiles.	CBP (CMCS)	Allotment societies landowners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Set up a county database for reptiles, and support the setting up of a Local Record Centre to hold and give access to useful information.	CCBC			✓							
6.5.1 Carry out surveys to ascertain sites and population sizes and input the data into the county borough database.	CBP	(GWT GLWT CMCS CCBC)	✓			✓			✓		

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Promote reptile conservation and improve public image through events and activities.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6.2 Liaise with local wildlife groups to encourage reptile awareness.	CBP	local groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓